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SUBJECT: CUBA: RUMORS OF UPCOMING CHANGES PERSIST

Classified By: COM: Michael E. Parmly: For reasons 1.4 b/d

[1](#)1. (U) SUMMARY: Rumors continue to fly in Havana about possible changes the Cuban government may announce in the near future. These may provide insights into the priorities of ordinary Cubans. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Dual Currency: The rumor: "The GOC will announce at least a partial revaluation of the Cuban national peso (CUP)." Although speculation on this ran high the week after Raul's 2/24 speech, which included a small sell-off of the CUP, it has gradually faded since. Another rumor is that the GOC will eliminate the eight-cent over-valuation of the Cuban convertible peso (CUC) with respect to the dollar (e.g. a return to one-to-one parity with the dollar instead of the current 1.08 USD per CUC).

[1](#)3. (SBU) Tourism Apartheid: The GOC will enact some mechanism by which Cubans, or at least some of them, will be allowed to use tourist facilities, such as hotels.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Travel Restrictions: The GOC will eliminate the requirement for the "tarjeta blanca" or exit permit necessary to travel outside of Cuba. Alternatively, the GOC will eliminate some of the other restrictions that make travel for Cubans so difficult.

[1](#)5. (SBU) Agriculture: Food will be made more available and affordable. Farmers will be given more choice on what crops to plant. Also, more land (for use, no title), animals, feed or materials may be granted to farmers who demonstrate they can increase production. One European diplomat was told by a GOC source that the Ministries of Agriculture and Food Industry will be merged, but that the Ministry of Sugar would remain separate.

[1](#)6. (SBU) Rationing system: The GOC may start to overhaul the system by making access to rations more of a subsidy for the neediest Cubans than a universal right for all Cubans, including those who do not depend on them.

[1](#)7. (SBU) Health Care: Cubans will be allowed to fill a prescription in any pharmacy. Currently, Cubans can only fill a prescription in the specific pharmacy where their doctor is directed to prescribe.

¶8. (SBU) Small Business: The GOC will ease some of the restrictions on running the few existing small private businesses, such as family restaurants and non-state taxi drivers. Similarly, the GOC may once again begin to re-issue licenses to operate such businesses.

¶9. (SBU) Housing: There will be fewer restrictions on attaining a permit to move into -- although not own -- a house, to swap housing, or to acquire building supplies.

¶10. (SBU) Cars: Cubans will be able to purchase personal vehicles.

¶11. (SBU) Political prisoners: The GOC would be willing to exchange an unspecified number of political prisoners (out of the so-called 75) in return for the Cuban "5" (5 Cubans convicted for spying in the U.S.).

¶12. (SBU) Comment: The rumors we hear from Cubans are not about political change. As time passes since 2/24 with no changes announced, the intensity of the rumors has begun to subside. The expectations, however, remain high, and are, we believe, the strongest immediate pressure on Raul and the GOC.
PARMLY